

*Lincoln. h. t.*

SEPTEMBER, 1915

# THE HARVARD GRADUATES MAGAZINE



VOL. 24



NO. 93

PUBLISHED BY  
THE HARVARD GRADUATES'  
MAGAZINE ASSOCIATION  
BOSTON, MASS.

Entered at the Post Office, Boston, Mass., as second-class mail matter, October 19, 1892.  
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*VOL. XXIV. — SEPTEMBER, 1915. — No. XCIII.*

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LINCOLN IN SOME PHASES OF THE CIVIL WAR.<sup>1</sup>

WITH minds full of the wreck of European statesmanship, entailing the most terrible war that we have ever known, it is difficult to turn our attention to another theme, yet it may be profitable to consider Lincoln in certain phases of our civil conflict. Any one who was in England during the first weeks of the present war could not fail to be struck with the many citations in the newspapers of his words, as if they were proper for comfort and guidance in England's great trial. Far is it from my purpose to proceed on the line of schoolmaster to our friends abroad; and indeed any one who assumes such an office is not penetrated by Lincoln's spirit, which teaches humility and would teach abstention from any vaunt because we happen to be more fortunate than the European nations who are fighting one another with grim tenacity.

Lowell's designation of Lincoln, "the most American of Americans," expresses the thought in the minds of many men. The wide appreciation of him abroad is grateful, but we feel that he belongs so peculiarly to our nation that we do not wonder when other peoples fail to see him with our own eyes. Perennial is the interest in him. He is one of the few men occupying high place during a momentous period of whom everything may be told. Therefore I shall speak of some of his mistakes with the utmost freedom, knowing that the balance between his hits and his misses will be on the right side.

When the Confederates fired upon Fort Sumter, it was apparent that the North must wage a war of aggression in the effort to compel the seceding States to remain within the Union, and that

<sup>1</sup> Phi Beta Kappa Address delivered in Sanders Theatre on Monday, June 21, 1915.



soldiers, generals, and munitions of war were her most important needs. Next was money, which has come to be called the sinews of war. Then wise diplomacy was needed to prevent any interference of European nations which, from the nature of the case, would be directed against the North. Great Britain was our chief concern. With her our ties of commerce were close and our chief staple, cotton, was the basis of her most important manufacture. Her public sentiment was opposed to slavery and slavery was the cause of the conflict. Her attitude during 1861, the first year of the war, was stated with cynical frankness by her Prime Minister, "We do not like slavery, but we want cotton and we dislike very much" your high tariff. The tendency of the nobility and higher middle class was for various reasons toward sympathy with the South, and their influence on the Government was, from the restricted suffrage that then obtained, more powerful than it is at present. Desirous as the North was for English sentiment in her favor on account of the issue of slavery, the President and his Secretary of State had to consider things as they were and not as they wished them to be, and they must use every effort consistent with honor to induce Great Britain to observe the neutrality which she had declared. Seward, the Secretary of State, was by his profession, experience of public life and association with men, well fitted for his position, but at first he seemed to think that defiant language was best suited to his diplomacy. Before Sumter was fired upon, but when seven Southern States had seceded and united in a Confederacy, Seward proposed a policy, which would have resulted in a war with four European nations, based on the idea that if a foreign war were brought about, the alienated sections would unite in amity and like brothers fight the common foe under the old flag. After Sumter, his language to Great Britain was that of menace and he deemed war with her possible. Here Lincoln appeared at his best. He ignored Seward's preposterous foreign policy, recommended before Sumter, in a manner to show that it could not possibly be entertained, but he kept secret the proposal, and, after hostilities began, he modified Seward's menacing dispatch so that when it reached our Minister to Great Britain, Charles Francis Adams, it had lost much of its sting.

After Seward had learned his lesson from his gentle master, he, with the President and Adams, wrought together to induce Great

Britain to maintain a strict neutrality. It was a never-ending work, attended at times with difficulty. Our defeat at Bull Run was a powerful argument in favor of the South, for, as Adams wrote, the English believe with Voltaire that God is always on the side of the big guns.

Then there was a duel of journalists which was a cause of irritation in both England and America. Nevertheless, the two Governments were approaching diplomatically a good understanding when a rash, "ambitious, self-conceited, and self-willed" naval captain not only undid in an hour all the advantage Adams, Seward, and Lincoln had gained in six months, but brought the two countries to the brink of war.

James M. Mason and John Slidell, Commissioners from the Confederate States to Great Britain and France, left Charleston on a little Confederate steamer, and, evading the blockade, reached a Cuban port, whence they proceeded to Havana and took the British mail packet *Trent* for St. Thomas, where direct communication could be made with a British steamer for Southampton. On November 8, 1861, next day after having left Havana, the *Trent* was sighted in the Bahama Channel by the American man-of-war *San Jacinto*, under the command of Captain Wilkes. Wilkes fired a shot across her bow without result, and then a shell; this brought her to. He ordered a lieutenant, accompanied by other officers and a number of marines, to board and search the *Trent*, and, if Mason and Slidell were found, to make them prisoners. This was done against the protests of the English captain and of a commander of the Royal Navy in charge of the mails.

On November 15, Wilkes arrived at Fort Monroe; next day the country had the news. Rejoicing over the seizure, as if a great battle had been won, the Northern people completely lost their heads. Having yearned for a victory, they now held in their hands the two Southerners, whom, next to Davis and Floyd, they hated the worst, and they had struck a blow at Great Britain for her supposed sympathy with the South. All the members of the Cabinet except Montgomery Blair were elated at the seizure. He denounced it as "unauthorized, irregular, and illegal," and recommended that Wilkes be ordered to take Mason and Slidell on an American war ship to England and deliver them to the British Government. Senator Sumner, then in Boston, said, "We

shall have to give them up," and he thought it better to act on the case at once and make the surrender in accordance with the doctrine we had held regarding the right of search. The President's impulse was in the same direction. On the day that the news came to Washington he said, "We fought Great Britain for insisting by theory and practice on the right to do precisely what Captain Wilkes has done." Lincoln rarely, if ever, acted on impulse, but this was a case when the sudden first thought would have led him in the right direction. For the surrender of Mason and Slidell would have been a graceful, astute, honorable, and politic act, and needed no more courage in breasting popular sentiment than Lincoln, in a domestic matter, had previously shown.

But a leader cannot always run counter to public opinion, and at this time he feared to do it, although he must have realized that the voices of Mason and Slidell were more eloquent from Fort Warren than they would have been in London and Paris. Indeed, as a mere matter of policy, the United States ought to have made it easy for the author of the Fugitive Slave Law to reach London and the champion of filibustering in the interest of slavery to reach Paris, since their pleading could hardly injure the Northern cause, so well was it understood, at any rate in England, that they represented slavery. Slow to act and distrustful of his impulses, Lincoln let the great opportunity slip when with a word he might have won the equivalent of a successful campaign in the field. Alike a leader and representative of public sentiment, he in this instance suffered his representative character to overtop the other. And the sympathy he felt with the popular opinion toward the South and Great Britain prevented him from making a brilliant stroke.

The result is well known. England made a formal demand for the surrender of Mason and Slidell and they were given up. But it is not pleasant for a nation to act under compulsion. How much better it would have been to make the surrender of our own free will!

The affair left a rankling wound. Lowell and Asa Gray, regarding the demand inconsiderate and peremptory, felt sore. Darwin in June, 1861, had expressed his warm sympathy with the North; but now confessed that he felt the "Torifying influence" of "the present American row."



After the *Trent* affair our foreign relations were conducted with marked discretion, due to the excellent work of Adams in England, Sumner's wise counsel, and Seward's efficient direction. Back of them was Lincoln, patient and enduring. Whether or not he made the remark often attributed to him, "One war at a time," he often thought it, and he was willing to support any one who could tide over the difficulties constantly arising. He suffered the violation of England's neutrality in the escape of the *Florida* and *Alabama* without making it a cause of war. Welles, the Secretary of the Navy, complained frequently in his diary that Lincoln and Seward were so afraid of a foreign war that they yielded too much to England. Many patriots at the time shared his opinion, but, as we review now the story of our intercourse with Great Britain during our Civil War, it is a marvel that with so many considerations involved, with so many causes of just irritation, our pilots steered the ship of state safely through all the shoals and breakers.

But the North needed military success. When Charles Eliot Norton wrote to his friend Curtis, "Nothing will do for the country but victories," he expressed the thought in everybody's mind. Adams in London yearned for them to brace his heart for his uncomfortable task; our Secretary of the Treasury needed them to make the greenbacks go and to float his loans; our Secretary of State, to point his diplomatic arguments; and Lincoln desired victories as the hart panteth after the water brooks. Before the debates with Douglas in 1858, if Lincoln was known at all in Boston or New York, he was looked upon as a fair country attorney of Illinois. Now this country attorney was the commander-in-chief of the Army and Navy of the United States and had to conduct what then seemed a gigantic war. Lacking technical skill, he had to find it and, in seeking military ability, he was handicapped by the lack of positive opinions and good judgment of his immediate advisers. Carpers and critics abounded and these often thrust themselves forward without helping him out of his difficulties. Nothing illustrates this better than his reply to Wade, a radical Senator from Ohio, who pressed him to remove McClellan. "Put yourself in my place for a moment," said Lincoln. "If I relieve McClellan, who of all the men is to supersede him?" "Why, anybody," replied Wade. "Wade," said Lincoln, "*anybody* will do for you, but not for me. I must have *somebody*."

While Lincoln committed many faults in military affairs, he rarely if ever stumbled in the broad field of politics. He had come to the fore on the slavery question and as President he had now to deal with it, believing as he did that slavery was the cause of the war. As early as March, 1862, he proposed compensation for the slaves, provided the States would, by their own action, abolish slavery. Congress adopted a joint resolution, making an offer to the States in the line of his recommendations. This offer was made during military successes of the North, chief of which was Grant's capture of Fort Donelson, and while, as a practical measure, there was no expectation that any but the Union border slave States would avail themselves of it, it was open to all and, if the people of any and all the Confederate States had at this time laid down their arms and respected the authority of the National Government, they would have received, in a plan of gradual emancipation, about four hundred dollars for each slave set free.

Lincoln measured the steps forward with discretion and kept the determination of the slavery question entirely within his own hands. He turned a deaf ear to overzealous counselors and he rescinded orders for local emancipations of slaves issued by officious generals. The Union victories did not give cause for long rejoicing; they were followed by the disastrous result of McClellan's campaign in Virginia, during the spring and summer of 1862. This disaster impressed Lincoln with the conviction that slavery must be struck at and he became eager to develop his policy of gradual emancipation of the slaves, compensation of their owners by the Federal Government, and colonization of the freed negroes in Hayti, South America, and Liberia, for he believed that the abolition of slavery by the slave States in the Union would make it difficult for the Southern Confederacy to maintain much longer the contest. Before Congress adjourned, he invited the Senators and Representatives of the Union border slave States to the White House and asked them earnestly to influence their States to adopt his policy. But he was unable to secure the assent of the border States to it. Bound up, as was slavery, with their social and political life, they could not understand that its doom was certain.

The lack of military success hampered the President in this as in all other action. It was part of the plan that payment for the slaves should be made in United States six per cent bonds, and,



while negro property had become admittedly precarious, the question must have suggested itself, in view of the enormous expenditure of the Government, the recent military reverses, and the present strength of the Confederacy, whether the nation's promises to pay were any more valuable. Gold, becoming a measure of the Union fortune, which on June 3, 1862, sold at three and one half per cent premium, fetched, on July 12, owing to McClellan's defeat and a further authorized issue of paper money, fourteen per cent. But it is certain that, if the border slave States had acted promptly, believing with Lincoln that bonds would soon "be a more valuable possession than bondsmen," they would have received for their slaves a fair compensation in United States bonds instead of having subsequently to sustain a flat monetary loss through the gift of freedom to the negroes.

During a drive to a funeral, a day after his interview with the border State Representatives, Lincoln opened to Seward and to Welles the subject which was uppermost in his mind. The reverses before Richmond, the formidable power of the Confederacy, convinced him of the necessity of a new policy. Since the slaves were growing the food for the Confederate soldiers, and served as teamsters and laborers in intrenchments in the army service, he had "about come to the conclusion that it was a military necessity, absolutely essential for the salvation of the nation, that we must free the slaves or be ourselves subdued."

On July 22, 1862, Lincoln read to his Cabinet, to the surprise of all probably, except Seward and Welles, a proclamation of emancipation which he proposed to issue. Reiterating that the object of the war was the restoration of the Union, he proposed emancipation "as a fit and necessary military measure for effecting this object." Seward pleaded for delay, fearing that on account of the depression of the public mind, the proclamation might "be viewed as the last measure of an exhausted Government, a cry for help, the Government stretching forth its hands to Ethiopia in a last *shriek* on the retreat." Better defer its issue, he said, until we have some military successes. The President had not seen the matter in this light; struck with the wisdom of Seward's objection, he "put the draft of the proclamation aside waiting for a victory."

After McClellan's failure, John Pope was tried with a worse

result. July and August, 1862, was one of the periods of gloom when the Northern people would probably have abandoned the contest if they had not had at their head an unfaltering leader like Abraham Lincoln. Lowell expressed the thought of many despairing people in his word, "I don't see how we are to be saved but by a miracle."

Lee invaded Maryland. McClellan, restored to command, followed him. They fought at Antietam; McClellan won and forced Lee to retreat. The historical significance of the battle of Antietam is that it furnished Lincoln the victory for which he was waiting to issue his proclamation of emancipation. Calling his Cabinet together on September 22, 1862, he said to them, "The rebel army is now driven out of Maryland," and "I am going to fulfil the promise I made to myself and to my God. I have got you together to hear what I have written down. I do not wish your advice about the main matter, for that I have determined for myself." He then read his proclamation of freedom:—

On the first day of January, 1863, all persons held as slaves within any State . . . the people whereof shall then be in rebellion against the United States, shall be then, thenceforward, and forever free.

On the morrow, September 23, this edict was given to the country.

Lincoln's policy regarding slavery was firm and consistent. In his annual message to Congress of December 1, 1862, he took as his text the sound and now familiar proposition, "Without slavery the Civil War could never have existed; without slavery it could not continue"; and showed in his argument a grasp of his subject which, in the light of our subsequent experience, has proved him a consummate statesman. He pleaded for gradual emancipation, appointing January 1, 1900, as the time when it should be completed to spare "both races from the evils of sudden derangement." It is to be regretted that this prophetic appeal was not reinforced by victories such as were wont to point the utterances of Cæsar and Napoleon. As matters stood, distrust of Lincoln pervaded both the Senate and the House, and for the moment his personal prestige amongst the people had paled because his armies had made no headway; so it was hardly surprising that his policy of gradual and compensated emancipation failed to receive the approval of either Congress or the country. Nevertheless, he had shown insight in seizing the moment of triumph to issue his

Proclamation of Emancipation, as from Antietam in September, 1862, to Gettysburg in July, 1863, the North gained no real victory and her Army of the Potomac suffered two crushing defeats.

During the hundred days that intervened between September 22 and January 1, 1863, the day of the necessary complement to the first proclamation, Lincoln's party had suffered defeat in the fall congressional elections and Burnside had gone down before Lee, yet the President did not falter. Regarding the proclamation "as a fit and necessary war measure," he wrote, on January 1, 1863, "I do order and declare that all persons held as slaves" in the States resisting the United States Government "are and henceforward shall be free. . . . Upon this act, sincerely believed to be an act of justice, warranted by the Constitution upon military necessity, I invoke the considerate judgment of mankind and the gracious favor of Almighty God."

If it be true, as Howells wrote, that we judge men more by their manners than their qualities, many contemporaneous judgments of Lincoln will be accounted for. Senators and Representatives and others who met him frequently distrusted his ability and force of character on account of his lack of dignity, his grotesque manner and expression, and his jocoseness when others were depressed, all viewed in the damning light of military failure. Ungainly in appearance and movement, he gave no thought to the graces of life and lacked the accomplishments of a gentleman, as no one knew better than himself. "You cannot refine Mr. Lincoln's taste," wrote Emerson in his journal, during 1863; "he will not walk dignifiedly through the traditional part of the President of America. . . . But this we must be ready for and let the clown appear, and hug ourselves that we are well off, if we have got good nature, honest meaning, and fidelity to public interest with bad manners, — instead of an elegant *roué* and malignant self-seeker."

Lincoln was stronger with those who did not come in personal contact with him and estimated him by his formal state papers and acts. Posterity, that has seen his ultimate success, bases likewise its judgment and looks with admiration on the patience and determination with which he bore his burden during this gloomy winter of 1862-63. The hand that draws Lincoln's grotesque trait may disappoint the hero-worshipper, but the truth of the story requires this touch which helps to explain the words of disparagement so



freely applied to him, and serves as a justification for those who could not, in the winter of 1862-63, see with the eyes of today. Had his other qualities been enhanced by Washington's dignity of manner, not so many had been deceived; but as it was, we cannot wonder that his contemporaries failed to appreciate his greatness. Since his early environment, in fostering his essential capabilities, had not bestowed upon him the external characteristics usually attributed to transcendent leaders of men, it was not suspected that, despite his lowly beginning, he had developed into a man of extraordinary mental power.

The President was patient with McClellan and clung to him after it was apparent that he was not the man to command a large army in an offensive campaign. Nevertheless, he made a mistake in removing him when he was unable to substitute a better general. Burnside, on whom the command devolved, made a brutal offensive attack, in which he suffered a grievous defeat, and then, in January, 1863, the President committed one of his worst errors in placing Hooker at the head of the Army of the Potomac. In his discouragement and growing irritability, he permitted himself to be guided by public sentiment which had been serviceable in political affairs; he felt that a vote of the rank and file of the Army and of the Northern people would have plainly indicated "Fighting Joe Hooker." Lincoln disregarded politics in his military appointments and he showed regard for the West Point education, although he did not rate it as high as we do at the present day. But in forming our opinion we have the whole experience of the Civil War and the record of both sides, which attests by severe and thorough practice the inestimable value of our Military Academy's training. While Hooker was a West Point graduate and had proved an excellent division and corps commander, he had neither the character nor the ability sufficient for the head of a large army, as might at the time have been known.

Nevertheless Hooker had merit. When he took command, the Army of the Potomac was depressed to a point of losing its spirit and desertions were of alarming frequency. The General went to work energetically to alter this condition and made his eminent talent for organization felt throughout the army. The sullen gloom of the camps disappeared; the morale reached a high point. Early in April the President, looking "careworn and exhausted," paid

Hooker a visit, reviewed the whole army and said that he was "highly delighted" with all that he had seen. Soon afterwards Hooker considered his army in condition to take the offensive. Encamped on the north bank of the Rappahannock River he had 130,000 troops to oppose Lee's 60,000, who were at Fredericksburg. Hooker made a successful crossing of the river, and on the morning of May 1, 1863, had assembled five corps under his immediate command at Chancellorsville with two other corps in supporting distance. He attacked; Lee made a counter-attack. Hooker lost nerve and issued an order to his men to fall back. The retreat demoralized the army; and his vacillation lost him the confidence of his officers.

After his retreat, Hooker decided to remain on the defensive and he expected that Lee would make a frontal attack on his center, to repel which he had made adequate preparation. But Lee was not accustomed to do what his enemy desired. He saw that such an attack "would be attended with great difficulty and loss in view of the strength of Hooker's position and superiority of numbers." But Lee was a fighter, and evincing supreme contempt for the generalship of his enemy, decided to divide his own force. On the evening of May 1, Lee and Stonewall Jackson might be seen in conference, sitting on two old cracker boxes, Lee entrusting to Jackson the execution of his plan to turn Hooker's right flank and gain his rear.

Early on the morning of May 2, 1863, Jackson, "the great flanker," started on a march which took him part way around the Union army. Lee gave to his lieutenant two thirds of his infantry and four fifths of his artillery, retaining the rest to demonstrate against Hooker's center. Jackson's pale face and flashing eyes showed his eagerness and intensity. "From his thin, compressed lips came the command, 'Press forward, press forward.'" He wore dingy clothes and an old cap; his men, ragged and rusty, carrying tattered flags, appeared an "undisciplined rabble," but they marched on in spite of the heat and suffering for want of water and food. Completing his fifteen miles of march, he reached a point west of the Union army, on the side of it directly opposite General Lee's position, within the attacking distance of the Union right flank, which was held by the Eleventh Corps. Jackson formed his troops in battle array. "The men took their positions in silence,

orders were transmitted in a low voice, the bugles were still; the soldiers abstained from saluting their general with their usual cheers." The Union Eleventh Corps lay quietly in position, unsuspecting danger. Some of the men were getting supper ready, others were eating or resting, some were playing cards. Shortly before six o'clock the Confederate bugles sounded. Jackson hurled most of his 31,000 upon the hapless 9000 of the Eleventh Corps, whose first warning came from the wild rush of deer and rabbits driven by the quick march of the Confederates through the wilderness. Then they heard the "Rebel yell" and received a withering fire from cannon and rifles. After a brief resistance they ran.

It was a dearly bought victory for the Confederates. Jackson, busy in the endeavor to re-form his troops, who had fallen into confusion from the charge through the thick and tangled wood, and eager to discover Hooker's intentions, rode with his escort forward beyond his line of battle. Fired upon by the Union troops, they turned about and as they rode back in the obscurity of the night were mistaken for Union horsemen and shot at by their own soldiers; Jackson received a mortal wound.

Hooker, anxious and careworn, despondent at the rout of the Eleventh Corps, was in mind and nerve unfit for the exercise of his great responsibility. The story of Sunday, the 3d of May, is that of an incompetent commander in a state of nervous collapse confronted by an able and alert general. Shortly after nine o'clock in the morning, Hooker was knocked down and rendered senseless by a cannon ball striking a pillar of the Chancellor House veranda against which he was leaning; but at that time the battle was practically lost. He recovered partially and did not relinquish the command; recrossed the river safely and without molestation. He had suffered a severe defeat and enormous loss.

When Lincoln received the telegram announcing the withdrawal of the Army to the north side of the Rappahannock, he cried out, "My God! My God! What will the country say! What will the country say!" On the same day Sumner came from the extremely dejected President to Welles's office and "raising both hands exclaimed, 'Lost, lost, all is lost!'"

Chancellorsville proved Hooker's incompetence to command a large army and would have justified his relief, but the President remained his steadfast friend. He visited the army soon after the



battle, and, taking the view that no one was to blame and that it was a disaster that could not be helped, so cheered up Hooker that the General came to feel secure in his position and to show apparent unconcern at the distrust of him in the army. "The President," wrote Welles in his diary, "has a personal liking for Hooker and clings to him when others give way." When the General's defects were put to him freely and with authority, Lincoln said, "I am not disposed to throw away a gun because it missed fire once."

Lee's success at Chancellorsville decided him on the invasion of Pennsylvania, which he made in June, 1863. Hooker likewise advanced northward on the line east of Lee's which enabled him to cover Washington. When the alarm at the invasion of Pennsylvania was at its height, when every man in the North tremblingly took up his morning newspaper and with a sinking heart watched the periodical bulletins, the intelligence came that there had been a change in commanders of the Army of the Potomac. Those in authority depended for the salvation of Baltimore and Washington on this army which the public, with its half-knowledge of the situation, also felt to be their mainstay. On account of a difference with Halleck, the President's Chief-of-Staff, Hooker asked to be relieved from his position. Lincoln made up his mind quickly, relieved Hooker and appointed George G. Meade, a true soldier, in his place. The quarrel between Hooker and Halleck was lucky for the North. On July 1, 2, and 3, 1863, Meade at Gettysburg defeated Lee, forcing him to retreat into Virginia. "Had Hooker remained in command," wrote Halleck on July 11, "he would have lost the army and the capital."

After Meade won the battle of Gettysburg and Grant captured Vicksburg, in July, 1863, Lincoln's self-confidence grew, as he naturally received credit for those victories. He was always a hero to his private secretary John Hay, who, living in the White House, saw him constantly under all circumstances. In August, 1863, Hay wrote, "The Tycoon," as he called Lincoln, "is in fine whack. . . . I never knew with what tyrannous authority he rules the Cabinet until now. The most important things he decides and there is no cavil. . . . There is no man in the country so wise, so gentle, and so firm. I believe the hand of God placed him where he is." A month later Hay returned to the subject in words that History confirms. "The old man," as he now called Lincoln, "sits

here and wields, like a backwoods Jupiter, the bolts of war and the machinery of government with a hand equally steady and equally firm."

The President had found the military ability which he sought in General Grant. He detected it at the time of the capture of Donelson and therefore stood by the General after his surprise at Shiloh, when he was the subject of much criticism and defamation. To one who stated the general protest, Lincoln said, "*I can't spare this man; he fights.*" Between Donelson and Vicksburg, Grant led a chequered career, but when the command of the expedition against Vicksburg fell to him he showed the stuff that was in him. From January 30 to July 4, 1863, however, was a long while for the impatient North, and slander and detraction of Grant were readily believed. It was at this time that Lincoln said, "I think Grant has hardly a friend left except myself." With a cool brain and steady judgment Grant formed a bold conception and he executed it with promptness and unremitting energy; the result was the capture of Vicksburg, one of the most important Northern victories of the war. This led to Grant's winning the battle of Chattanooga in the autumn, which gave the Northern people the first genuine Thanksgiving they had celebrated since the commencement of the Civil War. His assignment to the command of the Armies of the United States and his place with the Army of the Potomac followed. Just before Grant began his celebrated campaign of attrition, John Hay gave a picture of Lincoln that is worth recalling to mind:—

A little after midnight [Hay wrote], the President came into the office laughing, with a volume of Hood's Works in his hand to show Nicolay and me the little caricature, "An Unfortunate Beeing," seemingly utterly unconscious that he with his short shirt hanging about his long legs, and setting out behind like the tail feathers of an enormous ostrich, was infinitely funnier than anything in the book he was laughing at. What a man it is! Occupied all day with matters of vast moment, deeply anxious about the fate of the greatest army of the world, with his own fame and future hanging on the events of the passing hour, he yet has such a wealth of simple *bonhomie* and good-fellowship that he gets out of bed and perambulates the house in his shirt to find us that we may share with him the fun of poor Hood's queer little conceits.

This is the only reference I know of to Lincoln's reading Hood. Shakespeare was his favorite and his state papers show a vital knowledge of the Bible.

Lincoln and Grant! Both were noble servants of the Republic. In their relations, neither envy nor intrigue had a place. During April, 1864, the time of the White House incident which Hay has related, Grant was the most popular man in the United States. Both parties and all factions vied with each other in his praise. Vicksburg and Chattanooga were victories that bore down all detraction and raised the general who won them to a height of glory. It is striking to contrast this almost universal applause of Grant with the abuse of Lincoln by the Democrats, the caustic criticism of him by some of the radical Republicans, and by others the damning of him with faint praise.

In June the National Union, or Republican Convention, was to meet to nominate a candidate for President, and of course Lincoln desired the nomination. Nobody knows, he said, what the itching for a second term is until he has had it. But zealous friends of Grant without his connivance pressed him for the nomination, and word of this came to Lincoln. "If he takes Richmond, let him have it," he said.

Grant did not take Richmond during the year 1864. In fact his offensive campaign against Lee of May and June resulted in immense losses and failure, making a reconstitution and reorganization of the army necessary; these were made during the many weeks of inaction from June 18, 1864, to the spring of 1865.

Due to the blasting of the high hopes that accompanied Grant in his advance on the Confederates was the gloom which pervaded the North during July and August, 1864. One form of this was the grave disaffection to Lincoln, now his party's candidate for President, leading to a movement to induce him to withdraw. While the Democratic Convention had not met, there was no doubt that McClellan would be its candidate. During this period of depression, Lincoln made a memorandum which was not disclosed until nearly three months later and which shows the dominance of patriotism over self-interest.

This morning [he wrote on August 23, 1864], as for some days past, it seems probable that this Administration will not be reëlected; then it will be my duty to so coöperate with the President-elect as to save the Union between the election and the inauguration; as he will have secured his election on such ground that he cannot possibly save it afterwards.

Farragut, Sherman, and Sheridan won signal victories and Lincoln was triumphantly reëlected.



After the suspension of specie payments by the banks and the Government, at the end of 1861, the war was conducted on a paper basis. United States Treasury notes were made a legal tender and bonds were issued which could be bought with these notes, commonly known as greenbacks. Gold and silver disappeared entirely from circulation and paper of different denominations down to five cents took their place. It was a debauch of fiat money. The expenses of the Government were enormous, and Chase, the able Secretary of the Treasury, had trouble frequently in making both ends meet. Apparently the darkest days, financially, of the war were during 1864, when gold went as high as 285, and on one of them Chase was asked "What is the debt now in round numbers?" "About \$2,500,000,000," was the reply. "How much more can the country stand?" "If we do not suppress the rebellion," answered Chase, "when it reaches \$3,000,000,000 we shall have to give it up." It must have been at this time that Chase went to Lincoln, who knew nothing of finance or business, and asked, "What can be done about it?" Lincoln perplexed, but with a smile on his sad face, answered, "Well, Mr. Secretary, I don't know, unless you give your paper mill another turn."

If a man have other qualities to make him supremely great, nothing sets them off so well as magnanimity, and this quality Lincoln possessed in a rare degree. His treatment of Chase is one of those instances that make men wonder. Chase, holding the second position in the Cabinet, was so swayed by his craving for the presidency that he failed in loyalty to his chief; he was the center of disaffection; making no secret of his contempt for the President's ability, he cavilled in public and in private at the work of the Administration. He desired to use the offices in his department to further his own ambition and clashed more than once with the President, when he was unreasonable and Lincoln showed a high degree of patience. Chase's weapon was the offer of his resignation, and this was potent, as he had the confidence of the financial interests. Threatening it once, yielding at another time to Lincoln's persuasion to withdraw it, he on June 29, 1864, in a fit of petulance over a difference regarding an appointment, resigned again, and this time Lincoln took him at his word and accepted his resignation. During the summer of 1864, when Lincoln, now a candidate for reelection, was nearly weighed down by his

burden, Chase's sneers in conversation at the man in the White House were persistent and cruel. It must be added, however, that in the end he advocated from the stump Lincoln's reëlection. In October the actual Chief Justice of the United States Supreme Court died and Chase was warmly pressed by his friends for the vacancy.

The President's hesitation in not naming him at once came from the fear that Chase's restless desire for the presidency might prevent his making a dignified judge. During the interval when all claims were being considered, Lincoln on one occasion showed his sense of humor. One day, when his Secretary brought him a letter from Chase, he said, "What is it about?" "Simply a kind and friendly letter," was the reply. Lincoln did not read it, but said, "File it with his other recommendations." While he had sufficient reason to turn against Chase, he was too great to be vindictive or even unfriendly.

To a visit of Judge Hoar and Richard H. Dana after his reelection in November, 1864, we are indebted for his inmost feeling. "Mr. Chase is a very able man," said Lincoln. "He is a very ambitious man and I think on the subject of the presidency a little insane. He has not always behaved very well lately and people say to me, 'Now is the time to *crush him out*.' Well, I am not in favor of crushing anybody out! If there is anything that a man can do and do it well, I say let him do it. Give him a chance." What a noble sentiment of man to man! What wisdom for the conduct of affairs between nations!

On December 6, 1864, the President sent this word to the Senate: "I nominate Salmon P. Chase, of Ohio, to be Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States." "I would," he said confidentially, "rather have swallowed my buckhorn chair than to nominate Chase."

From November, 1864, until his death in April, 1865, Lincoln had a greater hold on the Northern people than any man since Washington. At the height of his fame he called his Cabinet together on Sunday evening, February 5, 1865, to receive an impressive communication. This was when the Southern Confederacy was tottering to her fall — only sixty-three days before Lee's surrender to Grant. Lincoln proposed a message to Congress,

recommending that they empower the President to pay to the eleven slave States of the Southern Confederacy, then in arms against the Union, and to the five slave States remaining in the Union, four hundred million dollars as compensation for their slaves, provided that all resistance to the national authority should cease on April 1 next. The Cabinet disapproved unanimously this project, and Lincoln with a deep sigh said, "You are all opposed to me and I will not send the message." But the proposal was a marvellous instance of foresight. Had the Confederate States, then on the brink of ruin, accepted it, there would have been an immediate fraternal reunion after the Civil War. Had they declined it, the President and Congress would have made a noble record. The offer, however, was too wise and too generous for poor human nature, and no one in authority could rise to the height on which Lincoln dwelt. But many men now, when they reflect on the events from 1865 to 1877, may well wish that the offer had been made. The sublime words of Lincoln's second inaugural are a fitting complement to the generous spirit he showed during this Sunday meeting with his Cabinet.

There is another incident during this happy period of Lincoln's life on which I love to dwell. On March 27, he visited Grant at his headquarters to confer with him and Sherman regarding what military operations were necessary in view of the approaching end of the war. The two generals were agreed that one or the other "would have to fight one more bloody battle and that it would be the *last*." Lincoln said more than once that there had been enough of blood shed and asked if another battle could not be avoided.

On April 9, 1865, Lee surrendered to Grant and the war was practically at an end. Lincoln's few remaining days were full of kind expressions to his prostrate foe. Had he lived, it is easy to see that his policy of reconstruction would have been mercy and consideration for the Southern people, wisdom in the gradual enfranchisement of the colored men, based on educational and other qualifications.

This, then, is Lincoln with his weaknesses and strength. He is not, as Mommsen wrote of Cæsar, the "entire and perfect man" who "worked and created as never any mortal did before or after



him." Verily Cæsar created Cæsarism for the modern world, the autocracy of the superman. But was he or Lincoln the greater benefactor of his own country? Which is the better policy to transmit to mankind, that of despotism or that of liberty? the better injunction, Submit yourselves unto Cæsar, or, Give every man a chance? In intellect Cæsar and Lincoln are not to be compared. We speak of the mighty Cæsar, never of the mighty Lincoln. But nobody says "Honest Julius," while "Honest Old Abe" will go down through the ages.

*James Ford Rhodes, h '01.*

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### WILLIAM ROSCOE THAYER.

THREE and twenty years ago, the *Harvard Graduates' Magazine* was an experiment concerning which some of us felt little enthusiasm. There had been something like an unrecognized tradition that the strength of Harvard should be based not on assertion but on achievement; to record, in semi-official guise, what Harvard had done and what Harvard was doing and should do, looked perilously like advertisement, of such temper as might probably develop into blatant proclamation of self-esteem. When the foundation of the *Magazine* was decided, but its name not yet familiar, some scoffer suggested that, in deference to the spirit of truth dear to Harvard, it might properly be named "The Trombone."

Today the *Graduates' Magazine* is not only an established fact in our University tradition; it is among the facts which touch the sensibilities of Harvard men everywhere. They have come to expect it, to welcome it, to care for it, as something peculiarly and happily theirs. They turn to it with full confidence that they shall find a candid, nowise arrogant record of what Harvard has accomplished, has attempted, has hoped; and the habit of years now assures them that this record, in all its phases, will be suffused with that impalpable, quenchless spirit which is our Harvard own. Quite to understand how deeply the *Magazine* has appealed and appeals to all who care for these things one must perhaps have strayed away from Harvard itself. There — even to this day — its utterances may now and then sound superfluously complac-

